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Food companies targeting kids online

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0607/060724-advergames-e.html>

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24 July, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Food companies targeting kids online

Greedy marketing executives have found a new way of selling their products to children - Internet games. The world's junk food makers are trying to sell their burgers, chocolate and soft drinks to children who play online. A new report says more than eighty percent of the world's food companies are using this sly new method. The report was created by America's Kaiser Family Foundation. It is called "[It's Child's Play: Advergaming and the Online Marketing of Food to Children](#)". It is the first major analysis of how food companies advertise to children on the Web. It highlights the tactics of companies such as Mars, Hersheys and McDonalds in targeting kids. The report says online ads are more effective than TV ads at hooking children.

The report sadly brings a new word into the English vocabulary – the "advergame". This is a technique to get kids hooked while they are having fun online. In addition, many other marketing tactics are used to get kids to spend long periods of time online. The food companies fill the games with logos and advertisements. They encourage children to e-mail their friends about products and brands. They also recommend children join special clubs related to the games. Children can increase their chances of winning games by buying the products and typing in special codes found inside the packaging. Many people are worried about the role food advertising plays in childhood obesity.

WARM-UPS

1. GAMES: Walk around the class and talk to other students about computer games and the dangers to kids. Ask what kind of games food companies might put online for children. Share your findings with new partners.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

Greed / marketing / executives / chocolate companies / child's play / advertising / vocabulary / fun / logos / brands / clubs / winning / packaging / obesity

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. MARKETING: Ask your partner(s) about which of these products it is OK for companies to target children using ads. Write down from what age it is OK to target children. Share your thoughts with new partners.

_____ Hamburgers

_____ Cola

_____ Sportswear

_____ Condoms

_____ Music CDs

_____ Computer games

_____ Cosmetics

_____ Mobile phones

4. QUICK DEBATE: Students A believe there is nothing wrong with food companies targeting children. Students B food companies that target children are very bad. Debate this with your partners. Change partners often.

5. ADVERTISING: With your partner(s), talk about the advertising of these companies. Rate whether or not the advertising techniques used by the companies are bad for kids (10 = very bad / 1 = not at all bad).

_____ McDonalds

_____ Coca Cola / Pepsi Cola

_____ Snickers

_____ Wrigley's Gum

_____ Baskin Robbins (ice cream)

_____ Pizza Hut

_____ Dunkin' Donuts

_____ Other _____

6. JUNK FOOD: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with junk food. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| a. Advertisers have found a way of protecting kids from adverts. | T / F |
| b. Junk food companies are targeting kids who play in playgrounds. | T / F |
| c. Over 80% of food companies use the Internet to target kids. | T / F |
| d. Online ads are better than TV ads at getting kids hooked on products. | T / F |
| e. "Advergame" may become a new English word. | T / F |
| f. Advergames encourage kids to mail their friends about new products. | T / F |
| g. Kids can get extra online power if they buy specially-packaged goods. | T / F |
| h. Many people believe the ads can help combat childhood obesity. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| a. greedy | unfortunately |
| b. junk | big |
| c. sly | part |
| d. major | garbage |
| e. tactics | pack |
| f. sadly | money-grabbing |
| g. in addition | suggest |
| h. fill | methods |
| i. recommend | sneaky |
| j. role | plus |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. executives have found a new | food companies advertise to children |
| b. The world's junk | than TV ads at hooking children |
| c. child's | e-mail their friends about products |
| d. the first major analysis of how | kids hooked |
| e. online ads are more effective | plays in childhood obesity |
| f. a technique to get | of winning games |
| g. get kids to spend | way of selling their products |
| h. encourage children to | play |
| i. Children can increase their chances | long periods of time online |
| j. the role food advertising | food makers |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Food companies targeting kids online

_____ marketing executives have found a new way of selling their products to children - Internet games. The world's _____ food makers are trying to sell their burgers, chocolate and soft drinks to children who play games _____. A new report says more than eighty percent of the world's food companies are using this _____ new method. The report was created by America's Kaiser Family Foundation. It is called "It's Child's Play: Advergaming and the Online Marketing of Food to Children". It is the first major _____ of how food companies advertise to children on the Web. It highlights the _____ of companies _____ as Mars, Hersheys and McDonalds in targeting kids. The report says online ads are more effective than TV ads at _____ children.

Sadly, the report _____ a new word into the English vocabulary – the "advergame". This is a technique to get kids _____ while they are having fun online. In addition, many other marketing tactics are used to get kids to _____ long periods of time online. The food companies _____ the games with logos and advertisements. They _____ children to e-mail their friends about products and brands. They also recommend children join special clubs _____ to the games. Children can increase their chances of winning games by buying the products and typing in special codes _____ inside the packaging. Many people are worried about the role food advertising _____ in childhood obesity.

such
analysis
online
hooking
greedy
tactics
junk
sly

fill
hooked
found
encourage
spend
brings
plays
related

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Food companies targeting kids online

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AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'junk' and 'food'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "ADVERGAME" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about the rights and wrongs of food companies using Internet games to sell their products to children.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- way
- junk
- sly
- major
- tactics
- effective
- sadly
- fun
- periods
- brands
- join
- role

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Have you heard of advergames before?
- c. Do you think advergames are normal and nothing to worry about?
- d. Do you think the executives designing advergames products have bad morals?
- e. What kind of laws do you think there should be on advergames?
- f. Do you think kids are sensible enough to know food companies are trying to hook them?
- g. What do you think of food companies placing advertisements in schools?
- h. Are you concerned that McDonald's ads that target kids focus on cheap, giveaway toys and not food?
- i. Would you let your child play online games that encourage him/her to buy hamburgers and soft drinks?
- j. What do you think of the word 'advergame'?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What do you think of the technique of getting kids to mail their friends to recommend a new product?
- d. Is it OK for junk food companies to tell kids they can get extra powers in games by buying products that contain special codes?
- e. Is television advertising or online advertising more dangerous?
- f. Do you like Ronald McDonald?
- g. Do you think the advergames could be good for kids?
- h. Games tell kids they can view TV ads online "over and over right now" instead of having to wait for them to be on TV. Is this OK?
- i. Would you like your child to have a McDonalds screensaver?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ADVER-CHILDHOOD: Imagine you are a marketing executive for a junk food company. With your marketing partner(s), write down some methods for the places below to get children hooked on your products:

	Strategies
School	
Internet	
Place of worship	
Hospital	
Library	
Playground	

1. Change partners and share your ideas.
2. Discuss whether you really, truly agree with each of your ideas.
3. Are there any companies doing these things now?
4. Do you think the ideas you thought of above will be common in the future?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information about advergaming. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. SURVEY: Conduct a survey of your family and friends. Find out their opinions on advergaming. Share what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson.

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the food company advertising executives. Tell them what you think about their games that make kids buy junk food. Ask them three questions. Which letter did you like best and why? Your partner(s) will answer your questions in the next lesson.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. T d. T e. T f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| a. greedy | money-grabbing |
| b. junk | garbage |
| c. sly | sneaky |
| d. major | big |
| e. tactics | methods |
| f. sadly | unfortunately |
| g. in addition | plus |
| h. fill | pack |
| i. recommend | suggest |
| j. role | part |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. executives have found a new | way of selling their products |
| b. The world's junk | food makers |
| c. child's | play |
| d. the first major analysis of how | food companies advertise to children |
| e. online ads are more effective | than TV ads at hooking children |
| f. a technique to get | kids hooked |
| g. get kids to spend | long periods of time online |
| h. encourage children to | e-mail their friends about products |
| i. Children can increase their chances | of winning games |
| j. the role food advertising | plays in childhood obesity |

GAP FILL:

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Sadly, the report **brings** a new word into the English vocabulary – the "advergame". This is a technique to get kids **hooked** while they are having fun online. In addition, many other marketing tactics are used to get kids to **spend** long periods of time online. The food companies **fill** the games with logos and advertisements. They **encourage** children to e-mail their friends about products and brands. They also recommend children join special clubs **related** to the games. Children can increase their chances of winning games by buying the products and typing in special codes **found** inside the packaging. Many people are worried about the role food advertising **plays** in childhood obesity.